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ABSTRACT

Views of three committee members of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) are presented in response to questions posed by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. The opinions of these members of Committee C on College and University Teaching, Research, and Publication are individual positions, rather than those of the AAUP. The following questions are considered: What does AAUP suggest to improve the preparation and continued development of college teachers as teachers? What are the principle disincentives and barriers to the improvement of college teaching? How does one realistically and practically remove the barriers and/or mitigate the disincentives? If American education is a continuum and if communication and interaction along that continuum have been lacking, what can colleges do to encourage faculty to take more active roles in outreach and cooperative academic activities, particularly with respect to middle schools and high schools? Are there any programs or subjects currently being taught either equally well or better in other kinds of institutions? Which institution is the proper provider of these subjects? Are there any subjects currently being taught in America's high schools that are better left to colleges? (SW)

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January 12, 1983

ED237029

Dr. Milton Goldberg, Executive Director
National Commission on Excellence in Education
1200 19th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20208

Dear Milt:

Enclosed you will find responses by members of our Committee C on College and University Teaching, Research, and Publication to the inquiries from Cliff Adelman. Although the responses come to you late in your own deliberations, we must consider them preliminary because, as you know, we did not become involved in this process until late in the fall and therefore have not had time to complete our standard processes of consultation within the Association. Indeed, you should view the responses as the comments of professors who are members of our Committee C, not as the formal position of Committee C or of the AAUP more generally. With this qualification, I hope that the enclosed responses to the questions will be useful to the Commission in its preparation of its final report.

The members of Committee C and I will be quite happy to meet with the Commission to discuss these questions and any others where our responses might be helpful.

In addition to enclosing the responses of members of Committee C, I have taken the liberty of commenting briefly myself on the questions posed; these comments should be taken as personal and not as the official position of the AAUP.

Please let me know if the AAUP may be of further assistance.

Cordially,

Irving J. Spitzberg, Jr.

NE 016 807

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List of members of Committee C:
*C. David Gruender (Philosophy), Florida State University, Chair
*Harold Goldwhite (Chemistry), California State University, Los Angeles
*Jacob Neusner (Religious Studies), Brown University
Mary K. Bonsteel Tachau (History), University of Louisville

*Respondents

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January 12, 1983

MEMORANDUM

To : National Commission on Excellence in Education

From: C. David Gruender, Chair, Committee C on College and University Teaching, Research, and Publication C.D.G.

Following are responses from members of Committee C to the questions posed by the Commission.

Question. What does AAUP suggest to improve the preparation and continued development of college teachers as teachers?

Responses:

Gruender. The question, as put, appears to assume that professors are a species of teacher, to be distinguished from other teachers by the age of their students: kindergarten-age youngsters are taught by kindergarten teachers; college-age youngsters are taught by college teachers. In our opinion, this view fails to take into account the full range of a professor's duties and responsibilities, as well as suggesting the existence of duties a professor does not have. How is this? In the first place, a teacher typically has the task of conveying one or more skills or subjects in an approved fashion within a controlled curriculum and under professional supervision; the students are children. In contrast, the professor is a master of his subject. He is a mathematician, a poet, a physician, or whatever, with duties to uphold the professional standards of that field, to do original and creative work in it, to convey a portion of its contents to adults who seek instruction voluntarily, and to use his special knowledge in the public service.

These duties are interrelated inextricably. One cannot be a good "college teacher" unless one is current with the developments in one's field, and, normally, that is through contributing to them. And, likewise, teaching others interested in your field is a positive help to your own creative work in it.

The preparation of professors-to-be is in the hands of universities with graduate programs and professional schools. Much instruction at

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this level includes some apprenticeship, and we recommend that a portion of this be supervised teaching, a practice already in wide use. Unfortunately, good teaching is not understood, and hence cannot itself be taught directly. But good teachers can be identified, and apprentices can learn something from them. For the rest, we see no alternative but to maintain the highest possible professional standards in each field.

The continued development of the professor as a teacher is spoken to by a variety of Association policies of long standing. To begin with, our standards of academic freedom and tenure provide an unusually long professional probationary period for an institution to decide on how well a new professor does his work: seven years. These standards are now widely, if not universally, honored, but each institution makes its own judgments about whom to keep. The Association's policy is that existing faculty in the field should play an important role in these decisions, and that an appraisal of the candidate's fitness for tenure should include an evaluation of his/her teaching. Over time, these practices should increase the probability that professors with better teaching abilities are retained.

Professors past the probationary period need, for their continued development, periods away from campus where they can engage in creative work in a different environment. For this, the Association recommends sabbaticals every seven years, a policy more honored in the breach than observance. Also, the past twenty years has seen a sharp contraction of opportunities for faculty exchanges of many kinds, both domestic and international. Improved faculty development requires a fully implemented sabbatical policy, and a wide variety of study, teaching, and exchange opportunities.

Goldwhite. The Association's policy documents include both explicit and implicit statements relevant to this question. The concern of the AAUP for a proper pre-tenure probationary period is largely a concern for the development of the college teacher (1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure and 1970 Interpretive Comments). The Statement on Faculty Workload (1970) and the Statement of Principles on Leaves of Absence (1972) are pertinent here also. However, as is usual in Association policy statements, the details of interpretation and implementation are left to individual college governance processes.

Neusner. In graduate school, students should be involved in work with those senior professors who take teaching seriously, should be asked to audit lectures and discuss what was done well and poorly in those lectures, should be supervised in conducting sections of courses, and should be guided in planning and carrying out their own courses. No student should get a Ph.D. who has not had the experience of both supervised teaching and also giving his or her own course.

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Questions. What are the principal disincentives and barriers to the improvement of college teaching?

How does one realistically and practically remove the barriers and/or mitigate the disincentives?

Responses:

Gruender. The Association's salary studies show that higher education has little in the way of incentives to give professors for anything, except the intrinsic pleasure they may take in having the opportunity to practice their craft. Even setting aside the current economic depression, academic salaries have fallen some twenty percent in the last ten years in relation to other professional salaries. Without much in the way of incentives, disincentives are not very significant.

Nevertheless, the evaluation of teaching plays a smaller role in decisions on salary increases and promotions of faculty at some institutions than does scholarly creativity. In part this is justified because creativity plays a role in teaching, but what may be more important is that we do not really know much about what good teaching is, so cannot evaluate it with the confidence with which we can evaluate scholarly creativity. And teaching poetry is such a different kind of thing from teaching medicine, to say nothing of the myriad of other subjects taught in colleges and universities, that it is not likely that good teaching in one of them has much in common with good teaching in another.

Institutions have very little money to invest in helping faculty to learn more about better teaching and learning. The learning side of the equation needs to be mentioned too, for we are as ignorant of that, and it is every bit as vital. Likewise, institutions have very little money to explore the use of new kinds of techniques and equipment. Indeed, the national trend has been that colleges and universities have been unable to afford to keep their technical equipment up to current standards. But then we need to remember that there has been a steady thirty-year decline in per student expenditures for higher education. We have been asking for more and more, and are willing to pay less and less for it. We want "accountability," and in the name of this goal have sought to increase the number of courses and students a faculty member is to teach, or, if his/her research is supported by a federal grant, to disallow that portion of his/her effort devoted to using his/her research as a tool to teach graduate students how to do research in that field.

It should perhaps be mentioned, too, that teaching is not entertainment, and that learning takes a great deal of effort on the part of the learner. Some students are unprepared by their previous experiences for the pain of this effort, and others are unwilling or unable to exert themselves intellectually in a noncoercive environment, which a college or university must be. Some succeed, and some fail, and some perceive this situation to be incompatible with democracy or somehow unfair, and that leads them to denigrate professors, teaching, and higher education generally.

All of these problems have solutions, the barriers and disincentives can be overcome, but they require a great deal of dialogue, a better understanding of the role of higher education, and national leadership towards revitalizing it, which the National Commission might help to provide.

Goldwhite. I see two principal disincentives or barriers. The first is the amount of consideration given to improvement in teaching in the personnel evaluation process, when a faculty member is being looked at for reappointment, tenure, and promotion. A good deal of lip service is paid to the importance of this area, but I believe that in actuality it is not weighted heavily, and, just as significant, is not perceived as being weighted heavily in many colleges and universities. One problem that faculty committees and administrators continue to wrestle with is how to evaluate teaching quality, and after decades of questionnaires and other devices, there is still no agreement on how to do this.

The second barrier is the inability or unwillingness of colleges and universities to invest in the improvement of teaching. By this I mean that they should devote a significant fraction of institutional resources to research and development in this area.

Neusner. No one knows what good teaching is, because people confuse being entertaining with presenting important lessons; there is too little interest in what is taught. But good teaching is the teaching of worthwhile things, not merely engaging in showmanship. So you can tell good teaching by reading syllabi, by studying the questions of exams, and by reading the finals the students write. For this purpose, the facts speak for themselves. I tend to trust student opinion very little. In all, the principal problem is that people do not really grasp what good teaching is. The barriers to good college teaching are the usual: sloth and stupidity of professors.

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Question. If American education is a continuum and if communication and interaction along that continuum have been lacking, what can colleges and universities do to encourage faculty to take more active roles in outreach and cooperative academic activities--particularly with respect to middle schools and high schools?

Responses:

Gruender. We have already commented on some of the discontinuities between primary and secondary education, on the one hand, and higher education, on the other. But while we do not think there is a smooth continuum, there are important functional connections between the two areas: teachers in the first area receive their education and training from the second, and a portion of those they teach come to higher education for further study.

Helpful as they can sometimes be as parent or community volunteers, we do not think professors can make a significant contribution to middle and high schools merely as occasional individuals. Effective long-run relationships are likely to be institutional in character. Schools, colleges, and universities each have their own special roles to play, and professors and teachers already have full burdens and

then some. There is not much basis for cooperative academic activities except for educational research, of which less and less is being funded; and "outreach" may mask some condescension.

There are, however, two areas in which functional interactions occur and could be improved. First, is the original education of teachers. This would appear to be an appropriate time for colleges and universities to reappraise their plans for the education of teachers, and, with help of leaders from secondary education, see how they could best be improved and revitalized. At the same time, state education authorities might begin to rethink their requirements for teacher certification to fit the new plans they develop.

Second, just as professors cannot function well without some occasional time away from students and colleagues to recharge their intellectual batteries, so teachers need similar opportunities. There are, however, even fewer sabbatical programs for teachers than for professors, and funding for them to return occasionally to college to extend or deepen their knowledge and improve their subject-matter skills have diminished sharply in recent years to almost nothing. Modest programs in the sciences and mathematics once existed, but, of course, they are important across the board. At the present time, neither local school districts nor colleges and universities are provided with any significant funds for this purpose.

Goldwhite. I have no suggestions beyond the obvious for removing these barriers. College and university faculty must be made more aware of the importance of going out and meeting and talking with their counterparts in these schools. This is parallel to the first barrier discussed in my preceding response. There must be a recognition by colleagues and administrators of the importance of this function. Perhaps some specific workload allocation could be made for it.

Neusner. American education is not a continuum, and we have virtually nothing in common with middle school or high school teachers. On the few occasions on which I have addressed high school audiences, I thought I was in a foreign country.

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Questions. It has been observed that there is a great deal of repetition in American education--particularly when one considers the range of education and training offered by high schools, colleges, employers, and other institutions. Are there any programs or subjects currently being taught in America's colleges, community colleges, and universities that are also being taught either equally well or better in other kinds of institutions? Which institution is the proper provider of these subjects?

Are there any subjects currently being taught in America's high schools which are better left to colleges?

Responses:

Gruender. American education is a diverse, pluralistic, and rich resource for a widely varied population. We cannot think of any subjects now being taught at more than one level that ought to be eliminated from one of them. Psychology, for example, is now commonly offered in high schools, although a generation ago it was rare to see it taught anywhere outside of higher education. The effect of eliminating it from high schools would be to deprive those who do not go on to higher education of learning about that important subject matter, and we cannot see how the country could gain from that.

Similarly, higher education finds it necessary to offer some courses that are normally taught in high school both because some students neglected to take them in high school, or took them but did not learn the materials. Little can be done about the former, for human beings do not always know in advance what they are going to do. A very great deal needs to be done about the latter--remedial courses--because it is a waste of higher education resources to teach elementary reading, writing, and calculating skills. At the same time, the solution will be neither easy nor quick, for high school students' skills in this area have declined steadily (by standard measures) for the past twenty years until now, and it is too soon to say whether the trend has been reversed. High school graduation once implied a level of attainment of these skills that would enable one to begin college-level work. But that was before high school graduation became almost universal. A number of efforts have already been launched in an attempt to remedy this problem, namely various systems of achievement examinations as requirements for graduation, but a thorough rethinking of the whole situation on a national scale is called for. In the meantime, higher education will be spending a significant amount of money on remedial courses for many years to come.

Goldwhite. The richness, plurality and diversity of American education is a great source of strength. We should strain to preserve this, not try to trim it. (I feel strongly on this topic, as a product of a much narrower system in another country). I do not believe that the "wisdom" of an external group should be used to dictate curricula and courses in any segment of education. It is much better (see my response to the preceding question) to encourage two-way communication between the various segments, and allow local understandings to handle problems.

Neusner. I do not really understand the first part of this question. I certainly do not think that any subjects now taught in high schools can be left to colleges. The rest of the question is too diffuse to contend with.

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January 12, 1983

MEMORANDUM

To : National Commission on Excellence in Education

From: Irving J. Spitzberg, Jr.

Question. What does AAUP suggest to improve the preparation and continued development of college teachers as teachers?

Response. There are no talismans which can be applied to the improvement of college teaching. The reality of the disciplinary structure of modern universities and colleges means that in most institutions the demands of disciplinary research will compete with the demands of teaching. This competition is not necessary, but I believe it is generally a reality. So the major challenge is creating a system of incentives to reward teaching in all institutions.

An important qualification on my first comment is the fact that there is a large number of small liberal arts colleges which rank teaching at the top of the priority list of institutional goals. The challenge is to develop public policies and also funding programs which encourage all institutions of higher education to make a greater commitment to teaching. Such a pattern of incentives is especially important to the large public universities, where evermore students will attend. Indeed, now approximately eighty percent of all students attend public institutions, and a substantial proportion of that percentage attends the large land-grant colleges with research and service missions. Therefore, the Commission needs to focus some attention upon the challenge of developing incentives for teaching in large public institutions.

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Questions. What are the principal disincentives and barriers to the improvement of college teaching?

How does one realistically and practically remove the barriers and/or mitigate the disincentives?

Response. The disincentives to teaching flow very much from the intrinsic rewards of research and the external benefits available

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to those who excel at research. I believe there is little to be done to remove the disincentives, although there is much to be done to increase the incentives for good teaching.

One reality which will create an incentive is that the future of particular faculty members, their departments, and their schools will depend upon their ability to attract enrollment during a period of diminishing enrollments overall. This incentive may contribute to the improvement of teaching.

The critical point about establishing incentives for improved teaching is that the faculty themselves must play the major role. As Clark Kerr has pointed out in his third edition of Uses of the University, the only reforms which succeed are those which meet standards set by faculty. And the faculty themselves believe that they have the right and the responsibility to approve all programs of incentives for teaching (1966 Statement on Government).

In a period of reduced resources, development of public policies which focus upon the quality of teaching, particularly in the large public institutions, might usefully complement the enrollment-driven engines, which in the future, because of overall enrollment decline, will not be sufficient to provide adequate support for higher education.

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Question. If American education is a continuum and if communication and interaction along that continuum have been lacking, what can colleges and universities do to encourage faculty to take more active roles in outreach and cooperative academic activities--particularly with respect to middle schools and high schools?

Response. The way not to improve interaction between universities and colleges on the one hand and high schools on the other is to establish yet another discretionary grant program. Instead, the availability of some additional resources to all school districts to encourage them to develop continuing channels of communication between colleges and universities and public school systems would allow the schools and higher educational institutions to create appropriate relationships in each and every school district across the country.

In a period of reduced enrollments, there will be the incentive of survival for colleges and universities to take an interest in assisting local school systems. A modest amount of federal money devoted to this activity would allow a substantial amount of constructive activity. But, once again, I must say it is critical that this money be provided on a formula basis to all school systems and not be dependent upon some arbitrary grant program.

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Questions. It has been observed that there is a great deal of repetition in American education--particularly when one considers the range of education and training offered by high schools, colleges, employers, and other institutions. Are there any programs or subjects currently being taught in America's colleges, community colleges, and universities that are also being taught either equally well or better in other kinds of institutions? Which institution is the proper provides of these subjects?

Are there any subjects currently being taught in America's high schools which are better left to colleges?

Response. In the best of all possible worlds, much of the basic teaching in English and mathematics would be completed in high schools and only more sophisticated work provided in colleges. In this least best of all possible worlds we simply do not have the luxury of drawing strict lines between what will be taught at the secondary school level and what will be taught in universities. There will inevitably be a difference of emphasis between the last years of secondary school and the first years of university; the challenge will be to improve the quality of secondary education so that there will be a difference in kind, not degree. I honestly believe that the problems of duplication, repetition, and redundancy--particularly between secondary education and undergraduate work--is not a major issue. Whatever repetition exists manifests itself in the system because it is necessary in order to improve the performance of students. The real question is how one improves the quality of the learning experience at all levels of American education. Some redundancy may actually contribute to the improvement of quality. Even in a period of scarce resources, the elimination of supposed duplication would not contribute significant resources for reallocation.

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Conclusion. The central problem is the diminishing total amount of real investment in American higher education. The single most important threat to quality has been the erosion of dollars per student in real terms in higher education. The best indicator of that erosion is the twenty-one percent reduction in real income of faculty from 1971 to 1981. If this decline continues, we simply will be unable to recruit the best and the brightest to higher education.

I do not argue that quality can be bought just by increasing expenditures; but I do argue that quality can be lost by the continuing reduction of our investment in all of our systems of education.

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January 17, 1983

Mr. Milton Goldberg
Executive Director
National Commission for
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Dear Milt:

Enclosed you will find responses to the Commission's questions prepared by Professor Tachau. Her responses now complete the set from our Committee C.

If you have questions about any of the responses, please feel free to get in touch.

Cordially,

Irving J. Spitzberg, Jr.

IJS:drb

Enclosures

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1. What does AAUP suggest to improve the preparation and continued development of college teachers as teachers?

a. All graduate students should be given extensive experience in teaching under the guidance of experienced teachers. Being a teaching assistant in the usual role--where the graduate student attends a senior faculty member's lectures and then has responsibility for a discussion section and grading is a good first step, but only a first step. It is when the graduate student has full responsibility for a class that she or he confronts the challenges directly, and it is then that guidance, constructive criticism, and advice would make the greatest impact.

Unfortunately, in my field (History), many of the brightest graduate students have no teaching experience at all in graduate school because they are able to get fellowships. Support for research is certainly an essential element, but administrators and donors should provide the means so that graduate education provides teaching apprenticeships as well as research apprenticeships.

b. The single most important factor in promoting the continued development of college teachers as teachers lies in tying in the reward system. It is administrators, for the most part, who have developed policies that reward research and publication but take teaching for granted. Most people who go into college teaching do so because they love to teach, but many of the best teachers soon find to their disillusionment that time spent on being a better teacher is time taken away from their research, and only the research is rewarded.

For those who are not skillful or enthusiastic teachers, workshops of a non-threatening nature should be established. I tend to think that great teachers are born with the qualities that make them great teachers, but certainly poorer teachers can be made better with the right kind of professional advice.

2.*a.* What are the principal disincentives and barriers to the improvement of college teaching?

The reward system, which honors research and publication but not teaching. Having one or a few "good teacher" awards at an institution is not sufficient. There should be one for about every twenty faculty members, if there are that number (and often there are) who are good teachers.

b. How does one realistically and practically remove the barriers and/or mitigate the disincentives?

Educate the administrators, or run the risks attendant to student rebellions (as happened in the late 1960's and early 1970's).

3. If American education is a continuum and if communication and interaction along that continuum has been lacking, what can colleges and universities do to encourage faculty to take more active roles in outreach and cooperative academic activities--particularly with respect to middle schools and high schools?

Colleges and universities should give released time to their faculty to set up workshops and professional meetings that include middle school and high school teachers in similar disciplines. It has been my experience that the latter are eager and willing to enter into cooperative efforts and to work with college faculty. But for the former, such efforts are simply "professional service," which is lowest on the scale of the reward system.

4.a. Regarding repetition of subject matter in American education:

I can speak only about my own field, which is history. The problem here is that there has been so much repetition of superficial information before high school (a bit of world history here and there, and U. S. history in the fifth, eighth, and eleventh grades) that by the time students get to college they are bored to tears when they are again presented with the same old material. I wish--this would be a true reform--that "history" be saved for high school, and elementary and middle schools instead teach about Indians or dinasaurs and biographies, which would better attract student attention. Then, good substantive courses in American government, U. S. and world history would be more interesting to students in high school. The high schools should teach students the facts and the excitement of history, and then when we get the students a couple of years later we would have a solid base to build upon when we teach students to analyze and evaluate.

6. Are there any subjects currently being taught in America's high schools that are better left to colleges?

I think that psychology, sociology, and anthropology are better left to colleges, although many high schools are offering these subjects in watered-down versions.

I would like to address the question conversely. I think colleges are teaching some subjects that would be better left to elementary and middle schools--especially languages. I also think more mathematics (including algebra, geometry) should be taught to younger students, as well as whatever is needed to familiarise students with computers.

The subjects that require a certain amount of sophisticated analysis, such as history and philosophy--and older literatures--are better saved for college (except for the kind of survey courses in history mentioned above).

3/15/83

1. What does AAUP suggest to improve the preparation and continued development of college teachers as teachers?

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Colleges and universities should give released time to their faculty to set up workshops and professional meetings that include middle school and high school teachers in similar disciplines. It has been my experience that the latter are eager and willing to enter into cooperative efforts and to work with college faculty. But for the former, such efforts are simply "professional service," which is lowest on the scale of the reward system.

4.a. Regarding repetition of subject matter in American education:

I can speak only about my own field, which is history. The problem here is that there has been so much repetition of superficial information before high school (a bit of world history here and there, and U. S. history in the fifth, eighth, and eleventh grades) that by the time students get to college they are bored to tears when they are again presented with the same old material. I wish--this would be a true reform--that "history" be saved for high school, and elementary and middle schools instead teach about Indians or dinasaurs and biographies, which would better attract student attention. Then, good substantive courses in American government, U. S. and world history would be more interesting to students in high school. The high schools should teach students the facts and the excitement of history, and then when we get the students a couple of years later we would have a solid base to build upon when we teach students to analyze and evaluate.

6. Are there any subjects currently being taught in America's high schools that are better left to colleges?

I think that psychology, sociology, and anthropology are better left to colleges, although many high schools are offering these subjects in watered-down versions.

I would like to address the question conversely. I think colleges are teaching some subjects that would be better left to elementary and middle schools--especially languages. I also think more mathematics (including algebra, geometry) should be taught to younger students, as well as whatever is needed to familiarise students with computers.

The subjects that require a certain amount of sophisticated analysis, such as history and philosophy--and older literatures--are better saved for college (except for the kind of survey courses in history mentioned above).